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SUBJECT: GOC PLANS TO PURGE GUEREDA?

SUMMARY

1. (SBU) Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Guereda report escalating ethnic violence between Zaghawas and Tamas, and suspect the Government of Chad (GOC) is stepping up its campaign to purge Guereda of Tamas. NGOs accuse the GOC of trying to eliminate any possibility of international scrutiny of such activities. They contend that local authorities are encouraged to turn a blind eye to acts of vandalism against NGOs, such as the November 6 theft of two vehicles from the International Medical Corps (IMC) compound, as part of a top-down strategy to drive them out of the area. Local Guereda authorities held fast to their standard line of support for humanitarian efforts and of harsh words for Sudan, which they consider the source of all local troubles. Meanwhile internally displaced persons (IDPs), all Tama, are steadily flowing in to areas around the refugee camps of Mile and Kounoungo. On one point, however, NGOs and local officials agree: the need for a United Nations (UN) presence on the Chad-Sudan border to address the insecurity. END SUMMARY.

GUEREDA NGOS CRY CONSPIRACY

2. (SBU) NGOs in Guereda suspect the Zaghawa-dominated GOC is stepping up its campaign to purge the area of members of the rival Tama tribe by empowering local Zaghawa authorities and military forces to rout the Tama from their villages. [COMMENT: A Tama led rebel group has been actively trying to overthrow the GOC and had attacked well into Chadian territory in September. This group is based in Guereda vicinity and is drawing support from local Tama there. END COMMENT] The IMC-administered Guereda Hospital received at least ten men with gunshot wounds during the week of November 6. UNHCR Guereda Protection Officer told Poloff on November 9 that "Zaghawas are killing Tamas every day and no one can do anything about it," given the Zaghawa-dominated authorities. As a result of this persecution, UNHCR and NGOs including CARE and IMC reported a new wave of IDPs to the Guereda area and its surrounding refugee camps of Mile and Kounoungo: over the past two weeks waves of individuals and families have been arriving from Sonout, now numbering between 250 and 300. NGOs have limited access to these groups and have been hindered in this effort by the local prefecture, which denies the existence of new IDPs.

3. (SBU) NGOs contend that the GOC is trying to keep them quiet about what the humanitarian community sees as a top-down effort to rid Guereda of Tamas. To do this, NGOs contend that local authorities are encouraged to turn a blind eye to acts of vandalism against them in an effort to drive them out of the

area. On November 6 six armed men attacked the IMC compound after 1:00 A.M., with three men jumping the barbed wire fence to steal two vehicles with the most fuel (one from IMC, one from UNHCR) while the other three waited outside the compound. The vehicles were identified at a checkpoint at Moudre but were waved through, reportedly by the order of the presiding commander. On November 12 the two stolen vehicles were recovered in Sudan. [COMMENT: Vehicle thefts are not new, nor is the fact that GOC authorities have been unable and/or unwilling to stop such occurrences or to punish perpetrators. END COMMENT]

¶4. (SBU) In light of this tension, UNHCR reported it was difficult to maintain the civilian nature of the refugee camps, whose inhabitants are predominantly Zaghawa. Three refugees were arrested by local authorities during the week of October 30 for carrying arms outside of Mile, and IMC reported that a large weapons cache was confiscated from refugees in Kounoungo during the same time period.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES BLAME SUDAN FOR GUEREDA INSTABILITY

¶5. (SBU) The Prefet of Guereda told visiting U.S. PolOff and OFDA officer on November 9 that it was the Sudanese who were inciting Chad's ethnic problems and accordingly creating problems for the humanitarian community in Guereda. He alluded to an emerging "Arab alliance" intent on destabilizing sub-Saharan Africa, having begun in Darfur and set to spread, if the Sudanese Government of National Unity (GNU) and the Janjaweed have their way, through Chad where he said the GNU planned to install an ArabPresident) to the

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Central African Republic and Cameroon. The Prefet blamed Guereda's proximity to Kulbus (45km away) for the November 6 theft at the IMC compound and insisted that rumors of collaboration between those who perpetrated that attack and the military were unfounded.

¶6. (SBU) The Prefet did not engage in discussions on the recent influx of IDPs, despite attempts by CARE and UNHCR to bring it up in conversation. The Prefet blamed the GNU for not being able to control its own borders and mentioned an increase in cross-border incursions by the Janjaweed that increased instability.

UN FORCE COULD BE PART OF GUEREDA SOLUTION

¶7. (SBU) The only point on which both the NGO community and local officials could agree was how to address, at least in the short-term, Guereda instability, and that was by means of a UN force on the Chad-Sudan border. UNHCR said a UN presence could help stem Zaghawa "anarchy" against the Tamas in Guereda and force the GOC to focus efforts on protection of refugees and humanitarian workers. IMC contended that thousands of troops would ultimately be needed to police the immense border area but conceded that even a token presence at the outset could help in protection. The Guereda Prefet was emphatic that the GOC had always supported an international border force, whether it be Chadian-Sudanese (per the Tripoli Accords) or UN. The Prefet added that the GNU was fully aware that a border force would put the international spotlight on Sudanese activities in Darfur and eastern Chad, another reason for the GOC to welcome the arrival of such a presence.